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SIPDIS

INTERIOR PASS FISH AND WILDLIFE
USDA FOR APHIS AND FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ISRAELI AVIAN FLU-RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON POULTRY IMPORTS

REFS: A) STATE 216147, B) STATE 209622, C) TEL AVIV 05579,
D) TEL AVIV 06170

1. SUMMARY: On October 13, 2005 Israel banned all imports of poultry products from Turkey following a reported case of AI there. Israel currently bans the import of poultry and poultry products from areas where AI cases have been confirmed - Southeast Asia, Croatia, Russia, and Romania. The supply of poultry products has not been affected by these bans, as Israel is largely self-sufficient in the production of poultry products. There has been no decrease in the consumption of poultry products in Israel, in part due to the level of public confidence fostered by public awareness campaigns regarding preventative food safety measures undertaken by the GOI's Ministry of Agriculture.
END SUMMARY.

2. In Israel, over 300,000 tons of chicken, 95,000 tons of turkey, and over one billion eggs are consumed per year. Due to kashrut practices and kosher food processing regulations, the majority of poultry products are produced in country. This increases the economic impact that an outbreak of the H5N1 strain of influenza would have on local poultry producers. The most at risk poultry population for contact with affected wild birds are table-egg layer stocks. This is because approximately ninety percent of such hens are raised in Moshavs, where between 2,500 and 3,000 hens are housed per building in a confined area, thereby making it more difficult to limit the exposure of healthy hens to unhealthy ones. According to the Chief of Poultry Services, Dr. Pokamunski, an AI outbreak among table-egg layers would decimate this industry sub-sector in Israel.

3. Breeder stocks are imported from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. All breeder stocks and turkeys are vaccinated against respiratory diseases that commonly affect poultry. The Veterinary Service has also established a vaccine assurance procurement arrangement with a poultry vaccine producer in the Netherlands. Under the terms of this agreement, a total of four million doses of poultry vaccine could be procured and shipped within 72 hours.

4. In terms of containment, if AI is found in a flock of poultry, all poultry flocks grown within a 3-kilometer radius of the affected flock will be culled to create a "sterile zone." Owners of these flocks would be compensated, but a financial compensation package has not yet been determined, and the owners probably would not be compensated for their full economic losses. Poultry flocks in the 7-kilometer radius outside any sterile zone will be monitored and undergo active surveillance for signs of disease. Poultry grown within this 7-kilometer radius would not enter the food supply chain without clearance from the Veterinary Service.

5. Dr. Pokamunski told post that if AI becomes a pandemic in Israel, there will be a "big mess" in the poultry industry and Israel will lose up to eighty percent of its commercial flocks. At the same time, he noted that the short-term risk of transmission of AI from wild birds to poultry would decrease soon as Israel is approaching the end of the southbound migratory bird fly over season.

6. Post has provided Ref A talking points to the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

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